

9. THE CRAB PLOVER (*DROMAS ARDEOLA*) IN KERALA

The Crab Plover does not appear to have been recorded in Kerala at any time and is not mentioned in Sálím Ali's *BIRDS OF KERALA* (Oxford, 1969).

On 11 February, 1979, we were at Muthalappoozhi, Perumathura, 29 km north of Trivandrum, where the backwaters (Kadhinamkulam and the southern stretches of the Paravoor Kayal) are linked with the Arabian Sea. In summer a sandbar forms across the channel, but this year it had not been formed even by the 8th of April.

Here the first bird to catch our eye was a solitary Crab Plover resting on the damp sand close to the surf, with the ridge of dry sand above giving it excellent cover from people moving about on the narrow strip of land between the beach and the backwaters. Between 8.20 and 11.10 a.m. we never lost sight of the bird.

Most of the time it spent resting quietly, often sitting on its tarsi or squatting with its breast and belly pressed to the sand. Although crabs were numerous and often ran right up to the bird, it never attempted to catch them.

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It was a juvenile, with dull black only on the mantle and back. The lower edge of the closed wing had an inconspicuous black margin. The crown, sides of the head and the hindneck were streaked lightly with grey. The wing appeared grey when closed, but in flight brown, with the forewing grey and a discontinuous grey wing-bar below it, and a curved band of grey just above the base of the primaries. The stout bill was black except near the tip where the inner edges of the mandibles appeared to be pale brownish. The legs were bluish, and the hind claw was prominent.

The bird was sluggish and at first permitted close approach. It never uttered any call although we put it to flight three times. When alert and suspicious, it stood erect and had an ungainly look. It stalked rather than walked, and never ran even when we walked fast towards it. V.K.S. went on the 23rd February to secure some photographs and found the bird resting amidst a flock of gulls. We went again on the 8th of April but found no signs of the bird.

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10. NOCTURNAL ACTIVITY OF THE TURNSTONE (*ARENARIA INTERPRES*) ON SOUTH SENTINEL (ANDAMAN ISLANDS)

In spring 1973 and 1974, while studying the behavioural ecology of the robber crab (*Birgus latro*) on South Sentinel, a small coral island not inhabited by man, we used to survey the beach in front of our tents almost every night and normally spent several hours

to record possible nocturnal activity of the robber and other crabs (For topographical and habitat data on South Sentinel see Altevogt and Davis 1975).

It was during these night watches in March 1974 that apart from ghost crabs (*Ocypode*